

Message Text

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SUBJECT: COURT LIFTS BAN ON AL AHALI'S LAST ISSUE

REF: CAIRO 14503

SUMMARY: BAN ON THIS WEEK'S ISSUE OF AL AHALI LIFTED BY SAME JUDGE WHICH UPHELD EARLIER CONFISCATION. COURT RELEASED PAPER ON BASIS OF CONSTITUTIONAL PROTECTION OF FREE SPEECH AND BECAUSE IT FOUND ISSUE'S CONTENTS WOULD NOT DISTURB PUBLIC SECURITY. PAPER REPORTED LEFTIST PARTY INTENDS SUSPEND POLITICAL ACTIVITIES IN PROTEST OVER LAW OF PROTECTION OF HOME FRONT AND THAT PARTY WILL CHALLENGE CONSTITUTIONALITY OF LAW. AL AHALI SAYS IT WILL NOW CEASE PUBLICATION BUT IMPLIES IT EXPECTS TO BE BACK. COURT'S REVERSAL GIVES HOPE THAT JUDICIARY WILL PLAY INDEPENDENT ROLE IN ADMINISTERING NEW LAW AND GOE INTENDS APPLY IT SPARINGLY. END SUMMARY.

1. BAN LIFTED. PRESS JUNE 8 REPORTS CAIRO COURT LIFTED BAN ON THIS WEEK'S ISSUE OF AL AHALI, WHICH HAD BEEN SEIZED TWO DAYS AGO. RULING MADE BY JUDGE ANWAR ABDEL
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FATAH ABU SAHLI, SAME JUDGE WHO UPHELD CONFISCATION OF AL AHALI WEEK BEFORE AND WHO WAS CONSEQUENTLY ATTACKED BY LEFTISTS AS PREJUDICED AGAINST THEM. PRESS ACCOUNTS OF AL AHALI'S RELEASE PLAY UP COURT SAYING THAT THE CONSTITUTION AND LAWS GUARANTEE FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN A FORM EGYPT "HAS NOT SEEN BEFORE". AKHBAR'S LEAD ON STORY WAS "THIS IS THE RULE OF LAWS".

2. ACCORDING TO PRESS, COURT NOTED PRESIDENT SADAT HAD MET FREELY WITH GROUPS, THAT THESE MEETINGS HAD BEEN BROADCAST, AND THAT PRESIDENT OPEN TO DEBATE DIFFERENT OPINIONS. EGYPT DESCRIBED AS HAVING "ATMOSPHERE OF FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY". COURT SAID AL AHALI PERMITTED TO PUBLISH BECAUSE CONTENTS OF THIS WEEK'S ISSUE NEITHER A CRIME UNDER THE LAW NOR LIKELY TO DISTURB PUBLIC ORDER. COURT NOTED THAT LEFT'S OPPOSITION TO THE LAW HAD BEEN REPORTED IN COURSE OF PEOPLES ASSEMBLY DEBATE.

3. CONTENTS. AL AHALI REPORTED LEFTIST PARTY WILL MEET SUNDAY TO DISCUSS DECISION ADOPTED BY PARTY SECRETARIAT TO SUSPEND POLITICAL ACTION IN PROTEST OVER PROMULGATION OF LAW TO PROTECT THE HOME FRONT. PARTY SECRETARIAT TO SUSPEND POLITICAL ACTION IN PROTEST OVER PROMULGATION OF LAW TO PROTECT THE HOME FRONT. PARTY SECRETARIAT CONSIDERS LAW "FLAGRANT VIOLATION" OF CONSTITUTION'S BASIC PROVISIONS AND CONTRARY TO EQUALITY OF CITIZENS, FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, AND RIGHTS OF MAN. LAW ROBS JUDICIARY OF ITS PREROGATIVES REGARDING CITIZENS' RIGHTS OF EXPRESSION AND POLITICAL ACTION, AND CREATES NEW AUTHORITIES FOR INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION. PARTY WILL ATTACK LAW AS UNCONSTITUTIONAL AND DEMAND ITS REPEAL. PARTY INSISTS ON MAINTAINING INDEPENDENCE AND INTEGRITY, REJECTING ANY INTERFERENCE IN ITS AFFAIRS.
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AL AHALI REPORTED THAT WAS ITS LAST ISSUE BUT ADDED THAT IT WOULD NOT SAY "GOOD-BYE" BUT ONLY "SEE YOU AGAIN". PAPER ALSO REPORTED TELEGRAM SENT TO SADAT BY GROUP OF FRENCH INTELLECTUALS URGING HIM TO STOP ALL ACTION AGAINST EGYPTIAN AUTHORS AND JORNALISTS. ON FRONT PAGE IS CARTOON WITH AN OPEN-MOUTHED CHARACTER, LABELED "PARTY OF THE GOVERNMENT", LOUDLY SINGING. IN BACKGROUND ARE THREE INDIVIDUALS WITH GAGS ON THEIR MOUTHS. THE CAPTION READS: "ONE SINGER".

4. COMMENT. RELEASE HAS HAD POSITIVE IMPACT ON JOURNALISTS AND OTHERS ON TWO COUNTS: (1) JUDICIARY MAY PLAY INDIRECT ROLE IN ADMINISTERING REFERENDUM LAW AND (2) IT MAY SIGNAL THAT, AS WAS CASE AFTER REFERENDUM OF FEBRUARY 10, 1977, GOE INTENDS TO USE NEW POWERS SPARINGLY. EILTS

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